Introduction

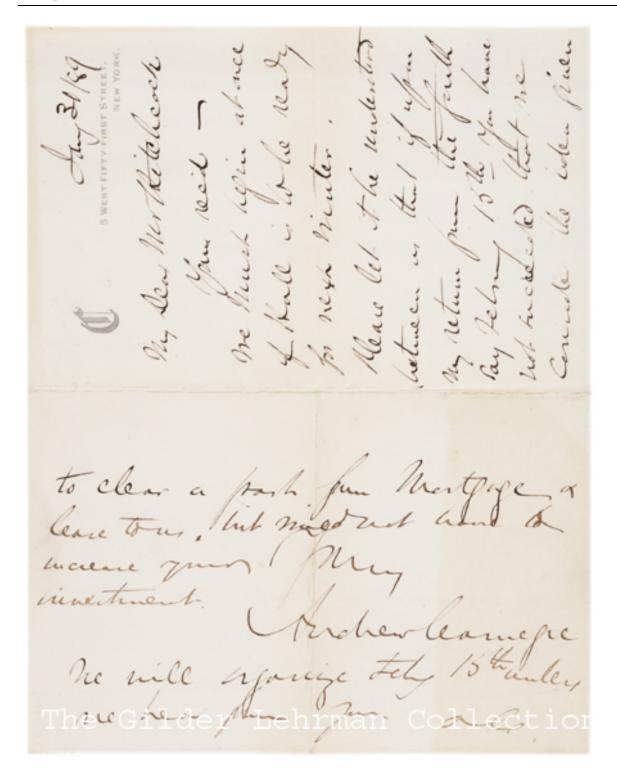
In early 1889, industrialist and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie was working on plans for a major music hall in New York City. On January 31, 1889, Carnegie wrote to Hiram Hitchcock, the owner of New York's Fifth Avenue Hotel, to negotiate Hitchcock's involvement in finding land for the project. Hitchcock was an entrepreneur who was also involved in the building of Madison Square Garden. Carnegie was eager to begin construction on the new venue, offering Hitchcock only two weeks to finish their negotiations. "We must begin at once," wrote Carnegie, "We have property in view & quite ready to go on & build the Hall . . . although we will wait on you until Feb 15th." Carnegie specified locations where he was interested in building the hall: "not below 56th or . . . upon Madison Square." Ultimately, Carnegie chose land on Seventh Avenue at 57th Street, donating one million dollars for the land and the hall's construction. The Music Hall (later re-named Carnegie Hall) opened on May 5, 1891.

Questions for Discussion

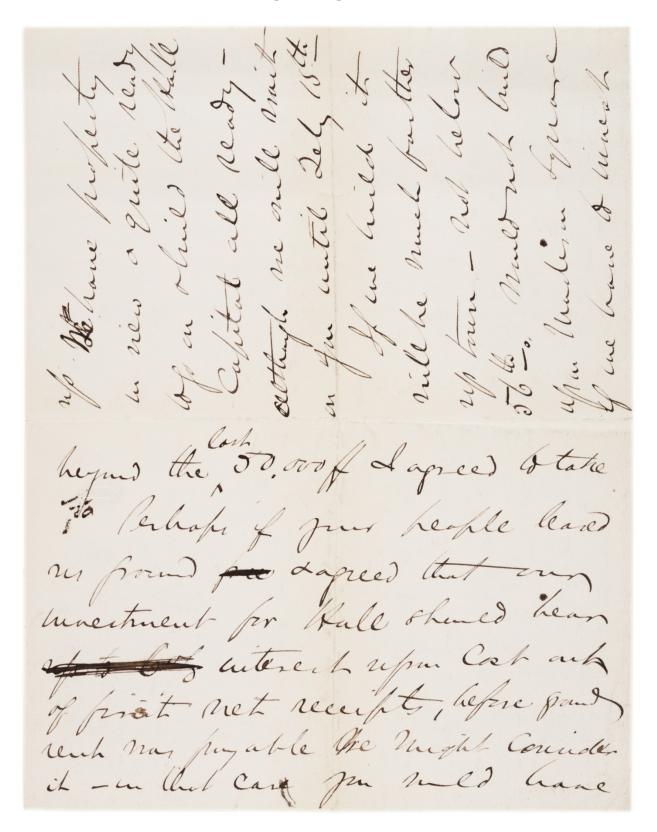
Read the document introduction and transcript and apply your knowledge of American history in order to answer the questions that follow.

- 1. How did Carnegie's plans illustrate the interests of the wealthy during the Gilded Age?
- 2. Carnegie's fortunes endowed libraries nationwide as well as other cultural institutions. How can we explain his willingness to support such philanthropy?
- 3. To what extent should we admire Carnegie as a benevolent industrialist or consider his contributions "conscience" money?

Image



Andrew Carnegie to Hiram Hitchcock, January 31, 1889 (Gilder Lehrman Collection, GLC02896)



Building Carnegie Hall, 1889

Transcript

Andrew Carnegie to Hiram Hitchcock, January 31, 1889 (Gilder Lehrman Collection, GLC02896)

Jany 31/89

5 West Fifty-First Street,

New York

My Dear Mr. Hitchcock

Yours rec'd — We must begin at once if Hall is to be ready for next winter.

Please let it be understood between us that if upon my return from the South say February 15th you have not succeeded that we consider the idea given up. We have property in view & quite ready to go on & build the Hall Capital all ready—although we will wait on you until Feby 15th

If we build it will be much farther up town—not below 56th. Would not build upon Madison Square if we have to invest beyond the last 50,000 ft I agreed to take [illegible]. Perhaps if your people leased us ground & agreed that our investment for Hall should bear [crossed out: up to illegible] interest upon cost and first net receipts, before ground rent was payable We might consider it—in that case you would have to clear a part from Mortgage & lease to us: but [illegible] increase your investment.

Yours

Andrew Carnegie

We will organize Feby 15th unless we hear from you. AC